

July 9, 2015

Written Testimony of Representative Norma Torres (CA-35)
Make It in America: What's Next?
PANEL 4: "Making It" Across the Economy

Thank you Mr. Hoyer for chairing today's hearing and for continuing to stress the importance of creating good paying jobs right here at home through the Make It in America agenda. It's an honor to join you and my other colleagues here today.

I represent the Inland Empire, which in addition to manufacturing is a hub for logistics and processing. As an inland port, many of the goods that come into the Ports of LA and Long Beach go through my district before being shipped to the rest of the country.

Unfortunately however, my district was also among the hardest hit by the recession. While we're certainly on the rebound, many of the jobs that have come back are lower wage, lower skill, and part-time.

They're not the kinds of jobs you can raise a family on.

Job creation remains at the forefront of my constituents' concerns.

This why I spent my first few months in office on a Jobs Listening Tour of my district, meeting with local economic leaders, education professionals, employees, and owners of businesses large and small. I wanted to hear straight from them what they thought we should do to bring jobs to our region.

My findings from this tour and recommendations were detailed in a report that can be found on my website, but I can tell you that at every meeting we held, two issues always came up, better infrastructure and improved workforce development.

The quick and cost efficient transport of goods requires safe and modern roads, bridges, and railways, and you can't connect people to employment centers without expanding public transit.

This requires significant, long-term investment in our nation's infrastructure, yet we're facing a \$3.6 trillion funding shortfall over the next five years and are relying on short-term, stop-gap transportation authorization bills.

There's no question Congress must do its job and pass a long-term Highway Trust Fund authorization, but we also have to look at new, innovative strategies to fill the gap.

The first bill I introduced after the listening tour, the Regional Infrastructure Accelerator Act would help us do just that.

Through the creation of multi-state organizations or Regional Infrastructure Accelerators, my bill will connect finance and infrastructure professionals with local and state governments to provide them with the technical expertise and pre-development capital needed to attract private investment to public infrastructure projects.

But even if we create jobs in the U.S. and build the infrastructure to support them, we need to make sure that American workers are trained to fill them.

The Job Opportunities between Our Shores Act, or JOBS Act, which also came out of what I heard during my listening tour, will connect educational institutions with manufacturers to train jobseekers in the skills employers demand.

There is already one such program at work in my district with the partnership between California Steel Industries and Chaffey College.

This is a model we should grow and build upon as manufacturing jobs in the Inland Empire and across the country are bouncing back.

If the recession has taught us anything it is that in order to build a resilient economy that can withstand future economic challenges, we need a dynamic, educated workforce and a diverse local economy.

Comprehensive, demand-driven educational programs like those proposed in the JOBS Act will help quickly train unemployed and displaced workers to meet the needs of a changing economy.

The global economy is only getting more competitive. We can't afford to take a backseat and hope things work out for the best. Congress needs to step up and take action to spur job growth right here at home.

Finding innovative ways to train American workers, both in high-tech manufacturing as well as other growing fields, and to fund our nation's infrastructure are a start and should form part of the Make It in America agenda.

I look forward to continuing to work with all of you to create the 21st century jobs our constituents deserve.

Thank you once again for keeping the spotlight on these issues. I hope our colleagues will follow suit.